



## United States Mission to the OSCE

### **Statement for the Opening Session of the SHDM on Electoral Standards and Commitments**

As delivered by Wendy Silverman, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor  
to the Supplemental Human Dimension Meeting on Elections, Vienna  
July 15, 2004

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you also to Ambassador Strohal and ODIHR for organizing this important Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on Electoral Standards and Commitments.

The United States is dedicated to the OSCE commitments regarding free and fair elections and has resolved to implement these commitments effectively.

As an example of our commitment and resolve, the United States Election Assistance Commission plays an important role as a “clearinghouse and resource for information and review of procedures with respect to the administration of federal elections” in the United States. This institution involves federal government, states, and communities in ensuring the right to universal and equal suffrage, transparency in election procedures, and the accountability of election authorities. As the OSCE/ODIHR Discussion Paper on Election Principles notes, these factors are key to fostering public confidence in the voting process.

Having this in mind, the United States welcomes the Discussion Paper on Election Principles. I would highlight two main points in the paper with which we agree: that elections cannot be assessed solely by examining the technical aspects of voting, and that transparency and accountability are absolutely essential components of democratic elections.

Free and fair elections, in which the electorate has confidence, are vital to the development and consolidation of democracy in every country in the OSCE region. The presence of domestic and international observers can enhance the electoral process and public confidence in it. That is why the United States has invited ODIHR to observe our own presidential and congressional elections on November 2. Furthermore, the United States commends other participating States organizing elections this fall that have also already issued invitations to ODIHR.

Mr. Chairman, we would like to take this opportunity to underscore that we do not see ODIHR’s election monitoring efforts as “politicized,” but rather as objective and based upon standards set out in the OSCE commitments stipulated in the 1990 Copenhagen Document and the 1991 Moscow Document and reaffirmed in the Charter for European Security adopted at the Istanbul Summit. ODIHR monitoring teams should not be seen as “interference in [a country’s] internal affairs,” but rather as an international resource, like the Election Assistance Commission that works domestically in the United States, which is available to countries that seek to improve public

confidence in elections and uphold their OSCE commitments. We look forward to discussing ODIHR's role in election monitoring, as well as all of the other issues brought up so far today, during the following day and a half at this Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting.

Thank you.